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The Power of Business Process Improvement
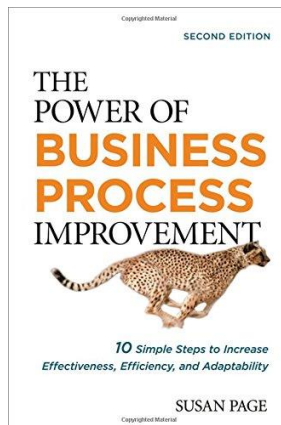Author: Susan Page
Book Review
Reviewer: Sheila Jackson

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title: ***The Power of Business Process Improvement: 10 Simple Steps to Increase Effectiveness, Efficiency and Adaptability (2nd Ed)***

Author: **Susan Page**

Publisher: AMACOM (American Management Association)

List Price: $37.95 USD   Format: Hardcover

Publication Date: 2016   ISBN: 978-0-8144-3661-5

Reviewer: **Sheila Jackson**   Review Date: April 2016

Introduction

A second edition of earlier book published in 2010, *The Power of Business Process Improvement* lays out a ten-step roadmap towards that end. Written for business professionals in general, the author's writing style is concise, clear and conversational. Ample charts and graphs provide readers with additional resources for plotting and planning. Page gets her points across effectively by using these visuals and plainspoken language, simple sentences. As a result one doesn't need to be familiar with trendy or arcane business terminology to gain or put her principles in practice. As part of her conversational tone Page reassures readers throughout that process improvements are achievable through her proven approach. The author consoles and gets her point across – Fear not; you can do this and here's how. After explaining her ten steps in detail Page supports them via two case studies and articulates how she problem solved through various unexpected twists and turns in the process.

Page not only shares her process improvement expertise but also offers her advice and guidance as to emotional IQ requirements for various steps. Her wisdom and insights on working in teams are worthy of note. Indeed it is generally acknowledged and observed that few efforts require more cooperation than corporate process improvements. Page's roadmap focuses on results through collaboration and cooperation.

Overview of Book's Structure

As one would expect for a book on process improvement, the book is well organized. The author sets that exacting tone in the seven page hierarchical Table of Contents. This structured breakdown on content enables readers to quickly reference specific topics of interest. The author provides sample documents and spreadsheets for arranging information and data gathered in progression of process improvement. She also provides a basic introduction to using Microsoft Visio flowcharts. This is helpful for those like me, with limited experience in Visio.

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While the ten steps in Page's roadmap are immediately recognizable to project managers and borrow heavily from PMBOK methodology the author steers clear of complex derivatives. At various points she pauses and restates what she has just explained. She then recaps her points through brief realistic narratives. At the conclusion of each of the ten steps Page summarizes the material as to "What You Have Achieved" and pauses for a "Knowledge Check".

Highlights

In around 360 pages the author excels in the daunting task of simplifying the highly complex and multi-variant progression through the stages of business process improvement. In fact, in chapter one ("The Roadmap: Learning How to Navigate") she decompresses the topic and unpacks her ten-step toolbox for readers. She then spends the rest of the book supporting and encouraging. The chapter on writing the Executive Summary is especially helpful as this is frequently where initiatives well deserving of recognition fail and/or flail. Again, Page does us great service in explaining that, like many other aspects of process improvement, there is not one master cookie cutter format for the Executive Summary. Knowing this, the book is chock full of examples, visuals, spreadsheets, samples and nuggets of wisdom. I am a big fan of visuals and the author does not disappoint. There is much to borrow from in conveying concepts and ideas in graphs, tables and charts, etc.

Highlights: What I liked!

There is no guesswork here. She clearly details out and supports her ten steps. Page shares anecdotal stories about personalities and projects and draws from her real world expertise so her approaches are based upon how things and people really work rather than formulaic theories that have not been put into practice. This goes a long way for readers in mitigating risks inherent in trying to implement and execute on concepts that have not been field-tested. Page offers to expedite the progression towards improvement through insights into what she has observed in working in multiple industries in varied settings and cultures. The two case studies elaborate situations where informed planning and preparation are challenged. Sometimes what should work simply doesn't. She impresses throughout that maintaining a realistic view through re-considering, re-weighing and re-viewing are keys to success. It is readily apparent that Page views the people aspect as front and center. She keeps her focus on the team and what works for stakeholders.

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book will be beneficial to most any business professional with an interest in the topic. In today's business climate at some level or another we are all in positions where we are expected to effect process improvements, even if that is limited to our own roles. There is something for everyone here.

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Conclusion

This book would be a great addition to any team building or corporate professional development curriculum. The way the book is structured lends itself to being read in and by groups. While it is lengthy (around 360 pages) the author's style and breadth of experience make it worthwhile. Process improvement is something we all need to know more about in terms of what works and what doesn't (the latter because we so often observe this versus success). Page has already traversed and mapped the road ahead through her ten steps. She now offers to share with us her proven insights into what works, with asides on various cautionary tales. Take the time and you'll be glad you did.

For more about this book, go to:
http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814436615

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the PMI Dallas Chapter. Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.net

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About the Reviewer

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Sheila Jackson, PMP, MBA has more than sixteen years of account and project management experience, working mostly in print production, live events, and ecommerce. For twelve years she worked for a global marketing/advertising agency. Her most recent work is within Internet marketing and omni-channel e-commerce.

Sheila has a BA in Psychology from Baylor University and an MBA from the University of North Texas.